

UNIVERSITIES & PRISONS ENGAGEMENT



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A workshop to share and develop practice

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Universities & Prisons Engagement

A WORKSHOP TO SHARE AND DEVELOP PRACTICE

OVERVIEW

- This workshop was held at the University of Edinburgh and brought together participants from over ten universities and higher education institutions; practitioners in the arts, education, health and criminal justice; and, representatives of the voluntary sector and government.
- The aim was to learn about some leading models of university-prison engagement (pp. 3-9), to gain a sense of what is already happening in this area in Scotland (pp. 10-13), and to provide a forum for discussion of these partnerships.
- Universities may be interested in greater engagement of prisons because of their commitment to social responsibility and widening access agendas and their interest in providing students with civic engagement and service learning opportunities.
- Prisons may be interested in engaging with universities to support rehabilitation and to provide multiple kinds and levels of activities to those in prison.
- A summary of key themes and issues discussed (pp. 14-16) include: the case for universities-prisons engagement; consolidating knowledge; building structures to support development; sustainability; media and communications; assessment and dissemination of knowledge; and next steps.
- A selection of useful readings and resources on education and prison is provided (p. 17).
- A list of those interested or registered to attend is included at the end of this report (pp. 18-19).

INTRODUCTION

Background. Interest is building in how universities might engage those in prison and criminal justice settings. A number of recent and exciting developments in Scotland and the UK motivated the organisation of this workshop to explore the ways higher education does and could engage with those in prison settings. The workshop offered a forum to learn about innovative practices and to share ideas about developing these and maximising impact. It featured keynote presentations by Professor Lori Pompa (Temple University, USA), who founded Inside-Out: A Prison Exchange Programme, a programme in which university courses are taught in prisons and attended both by (outside) university students and (inside) prisoner students; and, Professor Fiona Measham (Durham University) who has overseen the very first application of this initiative in the UK. This also provided an opportunity to share the many ambitious initiatives happening in Scottish prisons and led by its Education contractors, from delivering a philosophy MOOC (massively open online course) to men and women prisoners to running reading groups in prison to creating opportunities of student placements in education after prison.

Context. From one direction universities are increasingly acknowledging their social responsibility role, a role which entails active pursuit of widening access to higher education, working towards lower levels of social inequality, enabling experiential and service learning for students, and participating as an active member of communities in which they reside. From another direction, the Scottish Prison Service is demonstrating its commitment to new ways of working with those in prison through a greater focus on individual's strengths. This focus, it is hoped, will assist a person's own re-building of their lives, re-imagining of themselves and the wider society in which they will be re-integrating. These efforts have included ambitious plans and support for a range of educational opportunities within prison and education placements outside of it.

Participants. Registered interest in the workshop came from diverse sectors including: practice (arts, prisons), government, the voluntary sector and 11 universities and higher education institutions representing a range of disciplines from Nursing, Philosophy, Literature, Creative Writing to Criminology and Sociology/Social Work.

Welcome. Co-organiser Sarah Armstrong (SCCJR, Glasgow University) welcomed participants by offering her own perspective on the aims and importance of university engagement of prisons. Inspiring, ambitious education can happen anywhere, she noted, and wherever it does the human spirit is being nourished. Co-organiser Anne Schwan (Edinburgh Napier University) also welcomed participants thanking the many sponsors as well as speakers for supporting the day.

This brief report offers a minute of the workshop, summarising presentations, key themes and points of discussion, as well as collating information about participants and ideas for taking things forward.



THE INSIDE-OUT PRISON EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

**Lori Pompa, Founder and Executive Director, Temple University
(Philadelphia, PA, USA)**

Inside-Out grew out of Lori's belief that criminal justice students wishing to know about prisons should see this environment for themselves. At the same time, she was concerned to avoid the tendency of student visits to prisons to be experienced in a similar way as trips to the zoo – where inmates are observed in their 'cages'. Through conversations with prisoners as well as prison managers, the idea of running a full semester course emerged. Inside-Out put on its first course in 1997 at a state (i.e. sentenced) prison in Pennsylvania, Graterford State Correctional Institution, a maximum security prison holding around 4,000 inmates, a sub section of whom are serving life sentences without possibility of parole. Though initially focusing on criminal justice related courses, course topics quickly expanded and diversified to cover social sciences, arts and humanities and physical sciences as more and more academics sought out and went through the training process. The model has proved to be hugely popular. To date, 20,000 students (from inside and outside) have taken an Inside-Out course, without a single reported negative incident. The model has been adopted in numerous states in the U.S. as well as internationally. Following its organic development through the initial run of courses, , Lori obtained funding as a Soros Justice Senior Fellow to develop the model by creating curriculum tools, a training programme and other materials.

Lori identified these features of the Inside-Out model that support its sustainability:

- The programme is about *education*, and about collectively examining social issues through the prism of prison; it is *not* about: activism, pushing an agenda, studying prisoners, helping them or becoming their friends;
- The programme has strict parameters: Inside and outside students use only first names with each other and do not discuss their personal lives (or criminal histories), and do not maintain relationships after a course has ended;
- In Inside-out courses, everyone has an equal voice and everyone is held to the same expectations of conduct and assessment;
- The course instructor is a facilitator and guide of a *dialogue*, not a deliverer of lectures;
- An intensive, 7-day training course is primarily delivered by prisoners and is offered in two sites in the US (Michigan and Philadelphia); this training creates thorough understanding of core principles as well as covers a range of issues around the teaching process including management of boundaries;
- Think Tanks, consisting of inside and outside alumni, have been established to support training development and other activities.

She also mentioned some distinctive features of American prison populations that are unlikely to be found elsewhere. In the U.S. 2.2 million people are incarcerated, more than in any other country of the world, and whole life sentences where the person will die in prison are common.

The success of Inside-Out in reaching so many people in and out of prisons has been accomplished without any major media coverage. In fact, Lori noted that she has not sought and would be hesitant about such coverage given the vulnerability of crime and justice topics to be politicised and sensationalised.

Why does she do it? How has a programme with no advertising come to be in such demand around the world? Lori concluded by reflecting on the impact of Inside-Out for her personally and on those who have experienced it. She regularly hears from course instructors, students and prison staff – that this programme has changed [lives](#).



THE UK INSIDE-OUT EXPERIENCE: DURHAM UNIVERSITY

Fiona Measham, Professor of Criminology, Durham University

Durham Prison, Fiona pointed out, is practically on the steps of Durham University, visible from its windows. The two institutions dominate the city, each housing thousands of people and employees but cut off from each other by separate walls and cultures. Fiona, like Lori, talked about wanting to find meaningful engagement for students studying criminological topics through direct, and dignified, knowledge of prisons. Fiona completed the Inside-Out training in America, and having arrived at Durham University in January 2013, began the process of explaining and securing support for the model from local university and prison officials.

Inside-Out in Durham was launched in the autumn of 2014 running an 'Issues in Criminal Justice' Course, with additional prisons also becoming involved at staggered intervals:

- Autumn 2014: HMP Durham (Category B prison 13 Outside students & 8 Inside students)
- Spring 2015: HMP Frankland (Category A prison with 13 Outside students & 12 Inside students)
- Autumn 2015: course will run for the first time at HMP Low Newton women's prison (at request of Minister), plus three more Durham University staff are to undergo Inside-Out training in the Summer 2015



The two prisons, both for men, at which courses have now been completed, presented very different settings to trial a university course. HMP Durham houses people on remand as well as those on short sentences; the average length of stay at the prison is nine weeks while the university course is ten weeks. The age range of Durham prisoners varied greatly from 18 to over 60 years old. In addition the average level of education at this prison was reported to be on average at the level of a nine-year old, while the Inside-Out curriculum suggests the minimum starting point is having the educational attainment of a 16-year old. HMP Frankland, in contrast, has a higher security level, and houses long term prisoners. The Frankland prisoners' education level was generally very high, with half enrolled in or completing Open University degrees. The age spread was also narrower than at HMP Durham, with an average age range of 30s and also a great deal of ethnic diversity (half BME).

The closing ceremony at HMP Frankland took place two days prior to the Edinburgh workshop. Closing ceremonies are an important part of the Inside-Out model. They offer a forum to celebrate everything that has been accomplished over the semester. Crucially, they also provide a sense of closure, enforcing the boundaries that mean inside and outside students will no longer have contact.

Fiona reflected on the experience in Durham so far, describing issues, big and small, that all had to be worked through to realise the successful running of the course:

Hot drinks and biscuits: Attending a course in prison meant outside students effectively were giving up a half day with no food or drink, and allowed only to bring in a bottle of water. Tea and coffee at class meetings was prohibited on grounds of safety and security. Very gradually, hot drinks and homemade cakes were allowed at one prison, while at the other, tea and biscuits were permitted at the final meeting of the class. Having food not only supplied much needed energy to get through sessions, but also a sense of hospitality and sociability.

Back to handwritten essays: the distinctive qualities of the prison environment meant that resources outside students (and instructors) take for granted as part of education were entirely unavailable. No internet access and no computer access for writing essays or preparing assignments, meant inside students were limited to pens and paper. In keeping with the Inside-Out principle of a level playing field, outside students also were restricted to the use of pen and paper. All the reading had to be brought in (reading packs).

Stepping outside comfort zones: All students who completed the Durham course, significantly, were awarded academic credit (20 credits). To create parity between outside students, who typically would have achieved many A and B grade Highers to win a place at the university and well trained in academic modes of research, and inside students who may have high educational levels but limited training and access to research resources, a new form of assessment was employed. This was a reflective essay in which critically accounting for and evaluating one's own development and engagement with the project was a core element of assessment. Inside students were registered as Durham University students for the duration of the course (and were provided Durham University pens and folders).

Other aspects of the experience to think about as the model spreads to other parts of the UK (currently five or six institutions were mentioned as contemplating or actively developing Inside-Out courses, including Edinburgh Napier, Kent, Birkbeck, Cambridge and Teeside Universities). These include both practical issues of managing courses but also benefits and how best to articulate and champion these:

- **Role and presence of prison officers:** officer presence may be required, but how can this be integrated in a way that is not perceived as distracting or negative by students (worries about surveillance, removing informality and openness of discussions) and prison staff (feelings of boredom and exclusion)?
- **Asymmetries between student groups:** DU students were younger, white and mainly female, DP students were older, ethnically diverse and male. Durham University also attracts a relatively wealthy student population, often in contrast to the socioeconomic position of the prisoners. Interestingly, outside students tended to talk about criminological issues in terms of social structure and politics, while inside students were more likely to focus on explanations involving individual responsibility and making good or bad choices.
- **Continuing insider engagement after the course ends:** Lori Pompa's original group of inside students (the Think Tank) has continued to meet on its own, weekly, for over twelve years; similar plans are in train for the Durham groups.
- **Continuing outsider engagement:** Continuing outsider engagement: There is a strict 'no contact' policy for Inside-Out, with no visits, letters or any other contact between Inside and Outside students during or after the course. Yet Durham University students were profoundly affected by their involvement. There is a need to explore how to channel such energy and interest, e.g. through alumni events, and more broadly encouraging them to harness and direct their inspiration towards their future careers

whether related to prisons, prison education, prison reform or elsewhere, i.e. channelling them away from the connections to specific individuals, and towards the issues.

- **University resources:** need to defend and protect high staff to student ratios (relative to university based courses), training costs.
- **Aligns with university strategic aims:** offering the Inside-Out opportunity to Durham University students was associated with increased recruitment, employability, widening participation, student placements, local community engagement, impact, knowledge exchange, and even NSS scores!
- **Benefits for prison:** free (for now) university education, reduced reoffending, minimal extra resources (training, officers in attendance), positive PR, longer term – better staff-inmate relations, and generally supportive of prison ‘harmony’.

Perspectives of Students

For **Outside students:** lack of intimidation and competitiveness, sense of safety in inside-out class, ‘best course they’ve done’, learning beyond the textbooks – experiential learning, (for some) career/life changing. Doubts and concerns included: Some doubt whether course should be formally assessed: lack of experience with reflective report writing at crucial stage of their Honours degree and anxieties over marks; don’t want the experience to be reduced to a number at the end of it.

For **Inside students:** forgetting you are in prison – for a half day every week you are just another student, enhanced and high level academic skills, ripple effects in prison with creation of new reading/essay writing groups; respect, humanity, hope.

Concluding comment from an outside student completing the inaugural Durham course:

‘INSIDE OUT HAS BEEN AN EXPERIENCE THAT I WILL NEVER FORGET. I AM SO THANKFUL TO EVERYONE INVOLVED - BOTH THE INSIDERS, OUTSIDERS AND TUTORS. I HAVE TAKEN SO MUCH FROM THE COURSE AND... I AM SO GLAD THAT I WAS INVOLVED. I HOPE YOU HAVE ALL ENJOYED IT AS MUCH AS I HAVE.

‘I WOULD LIKE TO INCLUDE AN EXCERPT FROM MY FINAL ESSAY TO SUMMARISE MY REFLECTION:

“OVER THE PAST 4 SESSIONS I HAVE GROWN A BOND WITH THESE INSIDE STUDENTS AND I WAS NOW BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND THEIR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES. ABOVE ALL, I WAS EMOTIONAL BECAUSE I DIDN’T WANT THE PROCESS TO END, ALTHOUGH IT HAD HELPED ME AND CLEARLY AIDED THE INSIDE STUDENTS’ PROGRESSION, I FELT AS IF THERE WERE MORE BRIDGES TO BE BUILT ON BOTH SIDES. ALTHOUGH THE ‘COMMUNITY LEARNING PROJECT’ (POMPA, 2013) HAD SERVED ITS PURPOSE, PROVIDING ME WITH A FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON MYSELF, OTHERS AND WIDER SOCIETY, I WANTED TO DELVE DEEPER INTO THE LIVES OF THESE INDIVIDUALS AND UNDERSTAND HOW WE CAN HELP THEM REINTEGRATE INTO SOCIETY (WERTS, 2013). I WISH THE PROCESS COULD LAST LONGER, I KNOW AFTER THE LAST SESSION I WILL NEVER SEE THESE FRIENDS EVER AGAIN, I KNOW THAT I HAVE A FUTURE FILLED WITH OPTIMISM AND HOPE, WHILST THEY HAVE SO LITTLE. ALTHOUGH I WON’T BE ABLE TO HELP DWELLING ON MY EXPERIENCES FROM INSIDE-OUT, THE INSIDER STUDENTS HAVE NO OUTSIDE DISTRACTIONS AND I HOPE THEY CAN BE INSPIRED AND REALISE THAT THIS IS THEIR ‘LAST BASTION FOR REHABILITATION’ (JAMES, 2009).”

Questions and Discussion of Fiona and Lori's presentations

- Inside-Out is innovative but also **a specific model of prisons-university engagement**. There are **many other models of engagement** beside this, and perhaps specific issues depending on where work is done (e.g. free university education in Scotland may create particular opportunities or constraints).
- **Groundwork and relationships** are key to getting a programme off the ground – good and long standing relations between HMP Durham and some academics created supportive foundation to work from; support from key decision makers, e.g. high level university and prison managers is important.
- **Recruiting and vetting students** both inside and outside: how do you manage disappointment if not selected for course? May exacerbate sense of hopelessness for unsuccessful inside students, and create sense of unfair placement opportunities for unsuccessful outside students. Any blanket **exclusions** of students: interviews to vet potential participants; those whose convictions relate to sexual offending are not allowed to participate (per Inside-Out programme policy). How to vet and screen students? Consider **vulnerability** (both inside and outside), probe **motivation** for doing course; interviewing students can allow for assessing fit and also allow student to raise issues or reveal ambivalence.
- Just about **any course can be taught 'inside'**: a counselling course has recently begun at one prison; though many courses are criminal justice-related, increasingly other subjects are taught. Generally courses taught are already on a university's books, so no lengthy process of course approval involved.
- Every prison will have its own **issues and idiosyncrasies**. For example, computers are generally available to Scottish students in prison, though they too lack access to the internet. Different prisons have different population profiles, cultures and management styles.
- **Involvement of prison-based learning providers** and staff is possible but depends on the prison as well as structural issues in different jurisdictions (e.g. not all prison education contracts are flexible enough to allow development of HE links). Such staff may be able to support the programme by helping with studying and essay writing.
- **Safety and security training** for outside students often required by prisons can heighten anxiety of students, but experience at Durham and elsewhere suggests this dissolves almost immediately once class begins to meet.
- Creating a **sense of group rapport and ease** among prisoners and non-prisoners – many activities in the Inside-Out approach focus on this (90% process, 10% content). Examples include 'wagon wheel' at first meeting: everybody meets everybody on a one to one basis rotating in a circle to meet all. Starts with easy questions like who's your favourite cartoon character and ends with question: how did you feel coming here today? Also, rule is that **seating arrangements alternate prisoner/non-prisoner**, no two from same group together.
- **Application process** and commitment to course is rigorous: prisoners may have to give up visits, e.g. to ensure attendance; have to agree to all rules and boundaries.
- What do the **'Think Tanks'** do? These offer a continuation pathway for inside students, where prisoners continue to meet after course completes. They can also recruit new students, participate in trainings, act as an informal reading group.
- If it's not about studying people, **how do you assess impact?** Inside-Out recently got grant to do evaluation. Evaluation is important, knowing what you're doing and effects it has important. However, evaluation is **not primarily focused on 'prison-focused' outcomes** like reoffending or re-

imprisonment. This is because too many other variables affect these issues – a ten week class is not claiming to be a silver bullet. The same applies to university based classes: we don't evaluate the role of any particular individual class for having an impact on a given student. But education is part of and we need to capture how this is **creating options, hope, capacity**; this is true in prison or university classes. Beware of being corralled into narrow interest of this work on offender management type agendas.

- Hear about many **'unintended' positive consequences** of Inside-Out classes. How prisoners who never saw themselves as students became impassioned about education. How university students who had planned for one kind of career changed paths entirely following their experience. Participants suggest it is **important to capture effects on everyone – prisoners, university students, instructors, staff**, to try and measure and elaborate on these impacts to secure funding and support.



SCOTTISH HIGHER EDUCATION – PRISONS ENGAGEMENT

Glasgow, Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier Universities; New College Lanarkshire and Fife College Initiatives

Philosophy MOOC at Low Moss and Cornton Vale Prisons

Francesca Rossi, Edinburgh University

MOOCs (massively open online courses) are free courses offered online to anyone in the world. In this sense, they should lend themselves well to being delivered in a prison setting. This is because no background or minimum level of knowledge is assumed; they are designed to be readily accessible to anyone generally interested in a topic. Francesca is the Knowledge Exchange coordinator for Philosophy at Edinburgh University and saw offering the MOOC in prison as a great opportunity to engage a marginalised group of students. The Philosophy MOOC will be offered at two prisons, to allow both men and women to participate, and it will be run in a partnership between the School of Education and Philosophy at Edinburgh University, New College Lanarkshire (which oversees education in seven prisons in Scotland) and the Scottish Prison Service.

The [course](#) description of the different sessions is as follows:

- *Epistemology*, where we'll consider what our knowledge of the world and ourselves consists in, and how we come to have it;
- *Philosophy of Science*, where we'll investigate foundational conceptual issues in scientific research and practice;
- *Philosophy of Mind*, where we'll ask questions about what it means for something to have a mind, and how minds should be understood and explained;
- *Moral Philosophy*, where we'll attempt to understand the nature of our moral judgements and reactions – whether they aim at some objective moral truth, or are mere personal or cultural preferences, and;
- *Metaphysics*, where we'll think through some fundamental conceptual questions about the nature of reality.

One of the challenges for delivering a MOOC in prison is the fact that these courses are, as is clear in the name, web-based. With no prisoner access to the internet, Francesca and her team have had to develop an offline approach and materials. The course in prison will be delivered via CD Rom on PCs in the learning centres. In addition to the video lecture available to MOOC students, the prison-based course will offer a discussion tutorial facilitated by philosophy postgraduate students. This is a challenge, but also an additional opportunity for Edinburgh students to have unique, socially engaged placement opportunities. (The pilot is also training New College Lanarkshire staff in the Community of Philosophical Inquiry (COPI) methodology which has been used with some significant success in schools. Dr Mary Bovill, from the Faculty of Education at the University of Edinburgh, trains secondary school teachers in this approach, and will be delivering the training to staff and assessing its effectiveness in the prison setting.)

HM Low Moss Reading Groups

Nikki Cameron and Anna MacKenzie, New College Lanarkshire

Anna MacKenzie runs a group for students who have developing literacy skills or have issues that make working in larger groups difficult. Given the background of the reading group members, there is a more structured format than the other reading groups discussed, and a bibliotherapy perspective grounds the approach. Six students have been a part of this group since it began in October 2014, and almost unheard of for education initiatives, so far the retention rate for the group has been 100%. They have been reading whole books including S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* and *Looking for JJ* by Anne Cassidy.

Anna shared some feedback from reading group members, noting this is a group that can feel marginalised even within the generally marginalised population of a prison. Students reported feeling they were part of a group for the first time.

Nikki Cameron has taught philosophy in prison and runs a reading group for advanced readers. This group also started in autumn 2014, and has read several books already. Completed titles include Costa book prize winner *Shock of the Fall* (Nathan Filer), *Chariots of the Gods* (Erich von Däniken), *The Illiad and The Odyssey* (Homer), and *American Sniper* (American Navy SEAL Chris Kyle). The books show a range of interests and genres from non-fiction to popular fiction to classical Greek epics. Discussions are lively and critical (views were strong about *American Sniper* and the group thoroughly discussed its flawed premises of American heroism). In addition to discussion of readings in a group format, there are also opportunities for expressive writing and journaling. Students are provided and get to keep copies of all readings as well as journals for recording thoughts.

University Student Reading Groups at HMP Shotts and Greenock (New College Lanarkshire)

Rebecca Foster, PhD Student and Dawes Trust Fellow, Glasgow University

Rebecca is one of several PhD students of SCCJR (from the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow) participating in reading groups at Shotts Prison, a facility for long-term sentenced prisoners, and Greenock Prison, a prison which holds almost all categories of prisoner, men and women, long and short term, sentenced and remand. Most of the university students are working on PhDs in Criminology or Criminal Justice, while the prison based students are doing Open University degrees across a range of subjects like Social Sciences, Renewable Energy, Business and Marketing, Politics, Mathematics, Chemistry and the Arts. As a new experience for both sets of students, there was a period of getting to know each other and trust each other's motives; the university-based students clarified at the outset that reading groups did not involve any research on prison-based students. Learning managers (Ryan Dobbin, Jacci Stoyale) at the prisons participate as peers in the reading groups. A university staff member started with the Shotts group but has since left (to help start the Greenock group) so that it is now peer led. The Shotts group has been meeting since July 2014, and the Greenock group first met in January 2015. Topics have included zemiology (the study of social harm), metaphor, representations of women in media, researching mega sporting events, philosophy of science, class, the sociology of food and more. The group decides together what the topic will be for the next meeting, and someone investigates and selects readings.

Rebecca collected feedback from all the students involved in these reading groups. Views were highly positive about involvement and the eclectic mix of readings. Students said topics felt out of the ordinary, and liked a change from week to week. Readings in this group, at least for now, are not of whole books but a selection of

academic readings (journal articles) plus more applied readings like policy documents or long format essays. Participants expressed that there are often differing views on issues and readings, but these are communicated in respectful ways. Rebecca stated that:

'TOPICS ARE SUGGESTED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE GROUP, AND OFTEN THESE ARE PROMPTED BY INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS OR BY RESEARCH FOCUS. THIS MEANS THAT WHILE MEMBER OF THE GROUP MIGHT BE MORE OF AN 'EXPERT' THAN OTHERS IN ONE SESSION, THEY ARE NOT IN ANOTHER. THIS CREATES A REAL LEVEL PLAYING FIELD WHERE EVERYONE FEELS EQUAL. AN OU STUDENT SAID "EVEN THOUGH IT TECHNICALLY IS "US AND THEM" (AS IN PRISONER AND NON-PRISONER), THERE IS THAT ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM, IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE THAT, IT FEELS EQUAL.'

Some participants talked about the reading group creating a special kind of space, where you might feel normal in that time, not entirely defined by the fact of being imprisoned. It also provides a space of escape both for university and prison-based students, the former able to escape the pressure and stress of their doctoral projects, and the latter able to escape the sense of having a prisoner identity. Prison-based students also mentioned some really positive, rippling effects of the group – they talked to their wives about their reading, one gave a copy of the reading to his father feeling he would get something out of it.

Finally, students described a de-stigmatising effect of the reading groups. University students joining in the group as equals gave hope and confidence to prison based students that they might come to be accepted by fellow students on the outside as they pursued their studies after prison.

Men and Women Learning at HMP Greenock

Jacci Stoye, New College Lanarkshire

Jacci is the learning manager at Greenock Prison and spoke about the unique arrangements at this site where two of the Education sessions per week host mixed groups of men and women students. One session is for those working towards Open University degrees and one session is used to work on a student produced magazine. The mixed sessions mean that women, who because of their smaller population size have fewer services available, are allowed access to education in amounts approaching (though still not equal to) those available to men. The mixed sessions may support a 'normalisation' process, where activities that are unremarkable and ordinary in life (like mixed gender education) are integrated into the prison experience.

Literature Student Placements at HMP Edinburgh (Fife College)

Anne Schwan, Edinburgh Napier University

Anne went through Inside-Out training and, predating the Inside-Out training, developed a partnership with the Scottish Prison Service and Fife College, which provides education to HMP Edinburgh (and several other prisons in Scotland). Rather than a prison-based university course, Anne developed an initiative offering final year students on English and English & Film degrees a placement at the prison to support learners in prison. University students, working alongside prison education staff, typically engage in one-to-one literacy activities with students at the learning centre. The placement (consisting of one half-day session per week over six weeks) is loosely related to Anne's final year module Crime in Text & Film, which is about representations of crime and punishment in literature, film and media from the nineteenth century to the present. One of the course's underlying aims is to reflect on the significance of the voices of the incarcerated and how such voices

are mediated in culture and society. Students doing the placement have the option of replacing the traditional final essay assignment on the module with a reflective report, combining a reflection on their placement experience and any insights gained from it with research on prison education and related issues.

The placements show how even Humanities subjects can support experiential learning and practical employability skills attainment. Interest in placements has been strong, and to manage the numbers of applications and select appropriate candidates, Anne interviews all students with another member of staff. The Prisoners' Education Trust ran an [article](#) on the placement scheme in October 2014, with short accounts on its benefits from an 'inside' and 'outside' student participant.

The placement scheme has been running successfully since 2011. It's currently being expanded to Photography students at Edinburgh Napier. A basic letter of understanding outlines the roles and responsibilities of partner organisations. Anne's recent attempt to explore whether any additional paperwork would be prudent to establish a sound basis for continuing the scheme has triggered a degree of burdensome review of the programme that delayed the placement starts of students in this academic year. Anne was spurred by the Inside-Out model which advocates securing an extensive set of legal agreements to govern relationships. However, Anne suggests the UK presents a different context where seeking out similarly extensive agreements may trigger concern and caution rather than facilitate development of partnerships.

Questions and Discussion of Scottish Initiatives

Lots of **additional examples and placement schemes** shared by participants: placements available in youth offending teams, prisons and police via Northumbria University (Charlotte Bilby); a creative writing module offered by Strathclyde University has been available for over a year to prison-based learners and comes with an Open Studies Certificate (SFQ Level 7); a Glasgow School of Art initiative placing sculpture students (over 50 so far) in prisons has been running for three years, initially with funding from the Artworks Programme funded by Creative Scotland and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Recruit with Conviction is negotiating a set of placements for ex-offenders with NHS.

Participants debated over flying under the radar or putting one's head above the parapet (giving high profile to one's work or trying to remain more circumspect) in order to develop practice before over formalising arrangements.

KEY THEMES AND ISSUES

This section incorporates and builds on discussion of the workshop. It aims to reflect the spirit of the conversations and presentation, but it does not claim to speak for any other person than the author of this report.

The case for engagement between higher education (HE) and prisons

Participants talked about the motivation and value of doing this work. While there are numerous practical reasons to support greater engagement between prisons and universities, there was a sense in the discussion of not wanting to limit education to something that is 'delivered' from one person to another, and where success is measured narrowly or inappropriately in terms of a specific outcome. The presentations highlighted diffuse and powerful impacts of connecting university education and prison, resonating through all of those directly involved and beyond. Such examples of impact connect this work to research on service learning and transformation (see Deal, 2006). Good quality education and engagement is able to change lives both within and beyond prisons. This is a function of the substance of education and its contribution to supporting critical and active citizens. It is also the process of engagement itself, where people are brought together and allowed to encounter each other in a shared identity as learners and human beings. Warner (2013) recently pointed out a Council of Europe recommendation that:

'Education in prison shall aim to develop the whole person bearing in mind his or her social, economic and cultural context.'

The number of students involved in these activities in Scotland is growing and we are beginning to gather some anecdotal information about this. Outside students – nearly 50 – who have participated in the Glasgow School of Art (GSA) placement, for example, are revealing the extent of impact of this work. Many have stayed in touch – one going back in to HMP Dumfries this year to help with this year's placement. The relationship with the GSA has also had an impact on New College Lanarkshire, which has recruited some GSA staff to prison programmes – further strengthens the links between institutions. This shows one way that prison-HE links can have wider positive benefits on the prison curriculum.

Overall, there is a sense that universities have much to offer and gain by engaging with prisons, and that education in prison, contrary to stereotypes about literacy focused work, can be ambitious and high level. A very initial list of some further reading about the importance and potential of education is included at the end of this report.

A flourishing area of activity and a key moment to consolidate knowledge

There are, as noted, many forms and models of engagement. Some come with formal academic accreditation, others are less formal; some are linked to employability and developing graduate attributes that focus on university students, some are more focused on education of prison-based students. All of this activity is happening against a context where the Open University continues to be the main provider of higher education in prison. The rise of MOOCs and the increasing attention many universities are giving to widening access and social responsibility suggest it is an important time to understand how we can better capture the extent and diversity of practices to inform future development of prisons-HE engagement.

Structures to support coherence and development

What structures do we need to put in place to support and encourage existing connections and develop new ones? Scotland is a relatively small country; are there grounds for geographically based links (such as Stirling with HMP Cornton Vale and HMP Glenochil, and Dundee/Abertay with the Open Estate, in the same way Durham University is working closely with nearby prisons)?

It also would be important to create a recruitment and induction programme for outside students to ensure students are properly prepared for placement. On top of attending a project in prison, there is also a time commitment to attend induction, receive PPT (personal protection training) training and so on.

What exactly is it we would like to see in Scotland or elsewhere, and on what scale? Aside from the Open University and Inside-Out programme, many initiatives are small scale, focused on a single or small number of organisations or prisons. Might we start with replicating a home grown project like the Scottish book groups and placements, or set an aim of creating at least one initiative in every prison? This might speed the necessary groundwork of developing and agreeing standard protocols, training, support mechanisms. How can additional groups, particularly those led by and working with service users (like Positive Prison? Positive Futures?) be involved in these plans?

Sustainability is a central issue

Often funding is obtained on a pilot project basis or for one off support. Clearly, there is a need to ensure sustainability over a longer period of time. This requires thinking about sources of support, and also possibly about clarifying how investment in this area comes with high returns. As noted, running a course in prison can look resource intensive (because of staff:student ratios), but may also have disproportionately high payoffs (in terms of student satisfaction, institutional reputation and recruitment as well as in terms of how inside students do on release). It may also be necessary to consider how existing education budgets could and should be flexible enough to be used or re-directed to this kind of work.

Many universities have funding for widening access. Could such resources be drawn on to support these initiatives? Perhaps this could be used for a jointly funded national post to develop this work.

Finally, sustainability also includes building in long-term stability through non-financial forms of support. This includes developing trust and support from senior institutional managers, and embedding these initiatives within larger structures (of university degrees and institutional cultures).



Media and communications

There was much discussion of whether and how to engage media, and how to communicate the extent, success and value of current activities. Durham University experienced heavy media coverage, some of it in predictable terms in the tabloid press, but this did not hurt the success of this first UK Inside-Out project.

Media is also something that needs to be covered preparing outside students (and instructors) – what rules do we apply about social media use? Do we need to establish specific rules or guidance about sharing information about their experiences inside with others?

Assessing and disseminating stories of impact

How can we capture the powerful and sometime unpredictable effects of this work? How can we resist pressure to speak in terms of ‘offender outcomes’ yet still make clear the relevance of HE engagement for prisoners’ lives? Clearly there is a need to know what we are doing, to be able to understand how it affects lives and to communicate this both amongst ourselves and to outside groups. At the same time, conventional evaluation still hews to a medical model of separating out a specific ‘intervention’ and looking for its effects on a clearly defined patient/subject. This is criticised heavily even within the sciences where it was born. Rigorous evaluation might also be creative and expansive in thinking about who is affected and how in HE-prisons engagement. For example, research might look at impact on prisoners, wider prison culture, outside students and universities. It might take into account different qualities of effectiveness that apply to short term as opposed to long term establishments, allowing for tailored development of work and avoiding the tendency to see positive engagement as only possible with people who stay in prison for longer periods.

Next steps

Some ideas raised included:

- Forming a **Development Working Group** that could explore feasibility of developing networks, exploring pilot projects, coordinating grant activity, and coordinating future workshops;
- Developing a **Resource Bank** to share good practice and guidelines for placement schemes etc.
- Participating in Recruit with Conviction’s **Circle of Influence** on this and other issues relating to those with a criminal record;
- Moving forward with **funding applications** to support both operations and evaluation.

In addition, a list of registered participants and their emails is provided below in the hope that this facilitates networking and exchanges.

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

(Please send us additional links and readings!)

The Consortium for the Liberal Arts in Prison. Bard College. <http://consortium.bard.edu/>

Deal, Claire (2006) Learning with Conviction: Service Learning, Social Documentary, and Transformative Research. *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, 2(1): 1-16

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Warner, Kevin (2007) Against the Narrowing of Perspectives: How Do We See Learning, Prisons and Prisoners? *Journal of Correctional Education*, vol. 38(2): 170-183.

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